

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in a dark brown color, framing the central text.

Jump

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Summary:

Richie was missing and it was up to his friends to find him before anything could happen to him.

Eddie just didn't realise what he was going to find at the end of the trail.

Jump

Eddie had never been more relieved in his life to hear the bell ring and bring an end to school for the day. The first day back after summer break was never easy, especially when you were at the bottom of the social ladder. And also especially when you'd spent half the summer being terrorized by a killer clown and the rest of it being kept awake by nightmares and struggling to breathe when flashbacks gripped you. The loud shrill of the bell may have startled him a little but the relief it brought soon settled his heart.

With his arm newly freed from his cast, Eddie scooped up his books and sprinted for his locker. He didn't want to get caught in the crowds where it was easier for people to push you over or stick gum in your hair. Usually Richie would be with him, doing his best to 'protect Eddie' by mouthing off the bullies and becoming an even more attractive target himself. But Richie hadn't been at school, which was strange in and of itself.

You see, Richie was many things.

He was a loud mouth and basically never shut up when he was around people or even just by himself. He had a fondness for rude and sexual jokes and wasn't afraid to lash out when he was angry. He played lots of video games but he wasn't exactly good at them. He wore outrageous shirts which he claimed was a fashion statement and that he was just practicing to become a model. His way of protecting people was to get hit himself but he never failed to smile at his friends even as he held a wad of tissues to his bleeding nose or wrapped more tape around his broken glasses.

Richie also never missed school.

He was an annoyance to the teachers and made a nuisance of himself in class but he produced near perfect grades and his attendance was impeccable. Missing a day was cause for alarm and Eddie had been tempted to skip school and look for him, only he'd been too afraid to. Now that school was over though, there was no stopping him from biking around the town in search of his friend.

“Hey, wait up E-Eddie!”

Bill stopped him just shy of the exit. Stan was with him, curly hair longer than usual and framing his face in order to try and hide his scars. Ben and Beverly were both missing, for different reasons. Beverly had left Derry to live with her aunt and Ben had started a book club that ran afterschool. Mike didn't go to school, living too far out of town for it to be convenient. And so today, it looked like it was going to be what Beverly had once called 'the original four'. That is, if they wanted to help Eddie look for Richie.

“Where you going?” Bill asked.

“To find Richie.” Eddie adjusted the way his bag sat on his shoulders. “He's never missed school before.”

“We'll come t-too.” Bill gestured to him and Stan. The latter looked a little annoyed at the suggestion but he didn't vocalise it and soon they were at the bike rack, fiddling with locks and looking over their shoulders in case anyone came looking for a fight. Eddie ran through possible hiding places in his head as he tugged his chain through the spokes on his bike.

Derry wasn't a big town and it was isolated from pretty much anything but the surrounding woods and cliff areas were the perfect place to hide. If Eddie wanted to vanish for a while, he'd probably choose a place not too close to the town and big enough to get lost in. He was sure that was where they'd find Richie.

“Should we check his house first?” Stan asked as they got ready to set off. “He might just be sick.”

“Remember when he showed up to s-s-school with the flu?” Bill stuttered, flicking his hand up. Eddie shuddered at the memory. Richie had tried to kiss him on the cheek and sneeze in his face. It hadn't been a fun day.

“Still.” Stan cast an uneasy look at the direction of the river and its cliffy terrain. “Better to be safe than sorry.”

“True.” Eddie said reluctantly. He was certain that Richie was hiding

on the outskirts of town but Stan was right. They had to eliminate every option and Eddie knew that Bill and Stan would be annoyed if they'd spent hours looking for Richie only for him to have been under their noses the whole time.

It was a short ride to the Tozier place, a slightly run down two storey house with a wraparound porch and faded curtains hanging in the windows. Eddie couldn't see Richie's bike in its usual spot (dumped in the front yard under a tree) so he knew instantly that Richie wasn't home. That didn't stop Stan from marching up to the door and knocking firmly.

A memory flashed through Eddie's mind, of a time where he'd done the same because Richie had forgotten to come to the movies.

Eddie knocked on the door, shivering slightly at the flaky wood and the possibility of a splinter. He waited patiently for anyone to answer it but he couldn't hear any movement from inside the house. He tried again but there was still nothing. He backed away from the door and walked around the house until he found Richie's window. He could see the boy inside, dancing around with headphones on. That explained why he hadn't heard the door.

When Eddie finally got Richie's attention, the boy scolded him for knocking on the door.

"The only person who'll ever answer it is me and I don't even hear it half the time." He said flippantly. "Just come throw some rocks at my window. Best doorbell ever."

Freeing himself from the scene, Eddie turned to Stan.

"I don't think anyone will answer." He begun, only to fall quiet as he heard the sound of footsteps approaching the door.

"You were saying." Stan said smugly.

Eddie frowned. Maybe Richie was home and his bike had been stolen or something and he'd been at the police station all day to report the theft. That was possible, right?

However, the person who opened the door was a women with

tangled hair and a stained dress. A bottle hung limply from her hands and she squinted at the boys as though she couldn't see them properly.

"H-hi Mrs Tozier." Bill said, smiling feebly. "Is Richie home?"

"Huh?" He stared at them blankly. Eddie could smell the alcohol on her breath. "Who?"

"Your son?" Bill's smile fell. It wasn't like the boys weren't used to Mrs Tozier's drunken state but for her to forget Richie existed...yeah, the boy was never finding out about this.

"Go 'way." Mrs Tozier slurred. "I'm busy." She shut the door in their faces.

"Guess Richie isn't here." Stan said uncomfortably, reaching up to tuck his curls behind his ears before stopping short, obviously remembering the scars.

Eddie resisted the urge to say "I told you so" and just ran back to the bikes.

"Come on." He said when Bill and Stan followed at a slower pace. "We gotta find him before it gets dark."

"To the quarry?" Stan asked.

"The quarry." Eddie confirmed.

"Uh..." Bill hesitated, looking back at the house that Richie called home as they pedalled away and towards the rocky area. "I know w-w-we don't wanna talk about this, but w-w-what if It is back."

Instantly, Stan went pale. His eyes widened and he started to shake.

"No." Eddie said, a little weaker than he'd meant to. "We killed it. Richie's probably just...taking a mental health day."

"Richie isn't the kind of person to do that." Stan was really freaking out now. "Bill has to be right. It's back!"

“Who’s back?”

Eddie braked violently and nearly went tumbling over the handlebars. The sudden voice had shocked him, and Stan and Bill who’d also pulled their bikes to a halt.

“Mike.” Eddie said, relief obvious in his tone. “You scared us.” The homeschooled boy was on his bike, sending them a small smile. He’d said he’d ride into town to meet them after school but Eddie had forgotten about that until now.

“Richie’s missing and we think It is b-back.” Bill explained.

“I don’t think so.” Mike said softly, hands tightening around the handles on his bike. “Subtlety isn’t really something It was fond of. If It had Richie, we’d know by now.”

Thanks heavens for Mike, the voice of reason. Stan looked less freaked out now and even Bill was nodding as he saw the logic of Mike’s reasoning.

“I take it you’re going to look for him in the quarry?” Mike went on.

“Yeah, I figure that’s the kinda place he’d hide out in.” Eddie answered.

“Cool.” Mike nodded and they all set off again.

Nobody asked Mike if he wanted to help look, nor did he ask if he could. He just pedalled with them, because that’s what friends did.

“Where’s Ben?” Mike asked at one point as they got closer.

“He started a book club.” Bill smiled to himself. “A lotta people w-were interested.”

Nobody talked about Beverly. It was still too fresh.

When they reached the quarry, they split off into groups of two and begun searching for Richie. Eddie was glad to have Mike at his side, a strong and somewhat silent presence that he could rely on.

“Richie!” He yelled occasionally. “Richie, come on out! We’re worried about you.”

There was no reply or sign of movement, not that Eddie expected there to be. People who wanted to hide didn’t reveal themselves to the first person who went looking. Richie could be pretty quiet when he wanted to be, not that he’d ever really wanted to be.

There was a first for everything, though.

The sun travelled across the sky as the search continued. They met up with Stan and Bill at one stage who led them to a patch of bushes they’d found. Hidden under those bushes was...

“Richie’s bike.” Eddie breathed. “Oh, fuck.”

“We haven’t even seen him though.” Stan rubbed at his arm. “He might’ve dumped it and run. Or what if he got hurt and fell in the river and drowned.”

“Don’t even fucking suggest something like that.” Eddie hissed. “Let’s keep looking. There’s no way Richie is dead. He’s just hiding cause he’s a little shit.”

And so they kept searching. Eddie peered into bushes and at trees and even considered climbing a cliff at one stage. He was getting tired and worn out but he kept on looking, determined to find his missing friend. As they headed towards a towering cliff with a few caves sprinkled around the bottom, Eddie stumbled on some loose rocks and Mike caught him easily.

“He has to be here.” Eddie said in despair, sagging in Mike’s arms. “Stan’s wrong. He’s not dead. Okay?”

“Okay.” Mike let him go and looked up at the cliff. “I believe you.”

“You’re not going to tell me that I’m being too hopeful?” Eddie asked, a little suspiciously.

“No.” Mike said steadily. “Because Richie’s right up there.”

Eddie followed his line of sight and sure enough, Richie Tozier was

standing at the top of the cliff that loomed over them, easily visible due to his bright clothes.

“Oh my god.” Eddie whispered. If he didn’t know any better, it looked like Richie was about to jump.

“I’ll get Bill and Stan.” Mike turned and ran in the direction the pair had headed in after they’d split up a second time.

“Richie get down from there!” Eddie yelled up at his friend. “What the fuck are you doing?”

The figure startled, stumbling back from the edge. Richie was too far away for Eddie to make out properly but the screech he let out at being surprised said enough.

“Come down here right now or I’m coming up.” Eddie continued, realising that he sounded like a worried parent. Richie probably wouldn’t realise that, though. His parents were never worried about him. God, it hurt to think about that.

“Go away Eddie!” Richie finally recovered the ability to speak and Eddie was loath to admit but he’d missed his friend’s voice all day. “Get the fuck away from here!”

“Why?!” Eddie roared back. “Is it because you’re about to fucking jump and you don’t want me to see the body?!”

The silence he received was answer enough.

“Fuck, Richie. What the fuck are you doing?!” Eddie tore at his hair.

“What my dad told me to do!” Richie screamed.

“Since when have you listened to him?”

“All I ever do is listen to him! God, Eddie! Why the fuck are you here?! Why can’t you leave me alone?!”

“I’m not leaving you alone! Not like this!”

The two fell silent, breathing heavily. It was Richie who started

things up again.

“Now go away and leave me alone!”

“NO!” Eddie screeched. “Richie Tozier if you only ever listen to me once in your life, listen to me now! I don’t want you to die and you don’t want to die either! I know that this has been a fucked up summer and that you live a fucked up life! I understand because it’s the same for me! I fucking understand Richie! I understand! What I don’t understand is why you’re going to kill yourself without talking to someone first! This is the last option, Richie! Have you even tried the others?!”

Mike was taking a long time to get back with Stan and Bill and Eddie hoped that they’d be back soon. Maybe they’d be able to talk some sense into Richie as well.

“I don’t fucking know, Eddie!” It sounded like Richie was crying. “I know you get it so why the fuck aren’t you up here with me?!”

“Because I know there are still more options to try! And so do you! I know you fucking know it Richie! So get down here right now!”

Eddie regretted his choice of words the moment he said them. Richie stepped back towards the edge of cliff and there he teetered, swaying slightly.

“DON’T YOU FUCKING DARE RICHIE!”

Richie leant forward and that was when Mike appeared out of nowhere and tackled him to the ground, away from the cliff. Behind him, Stan and Bill stood, ready to bundle Richie into their arms and drag him away from the cliff.

Eddie’s legs gave out and he collapsed.

“We’re bringing him down!” Mike yelled over the cliff but Eddie barely heard it. He’d nearly gotten his best friend killed, all because of a shitty choice of words and his failure to be comforting. God, he was a fuck up.

It took what seemed like forever for Mike, Stan and Bill to bring

Richie down. When Eddie saw them in the distance, he managed to get back up and sprint towards them. Richie was crying and Eddie felt his own eyes start to water. Why the fuck had everything gone wrong? Why couldn't they have lived in a normal town without It, and with good adults who'd take reports of abuse and neglect seriously.

Eddie reached out for Richie and pulled him into a hug, relishing in how good it felt to hear Richie's heart beat.

"I'm sorry." Richie whispered. "I haven't slept in a week and my dad was yelling at me and I kept seeing It around every fucking corner and I just wanted it all to stop."

"I know, I know." Eddie said in turn. "You should've come to me. I could've helped you."

"I didn't want to worry you."

Eddie choked out a laugh. "It's a little late for that."

"..."

"Hey," Eddie pulled away briefly and looked Richie in the eyes. "You're okay now, alright?"

"If you say so." Richie scuffed his sneaker against the ground. Behind him, Stan and Bill exchanged a worried look.

"We'll work this out." Eddie insisted. "Just like we did with It. We're the loser's club. We can do anything."

"We can do some things." Richie corrected him, his lips tweaking into a small smile. Richie never could resist a joke at the loser's expense.

"Let's get out of here. It's getting dark." Stan sounded a little awkward, like he wasn't sure if he should be breaking up the moment, but he had a point. The sun had sunken low into the sky and was bleeding into a soft lavender.

It was beautiful.

"I don't wanna go home." Richie insisted, scowling.

"We'll stay at m-my house tonight." Bill decided. "We can call Ben."

"Really?" Richie's eyes looked hopeful behind his glasses.

"Really." Bill assured him.

"Sounds good." Mike grinned.

"Yeah." Stan chipped in.

"And we can work everything out." Eddie pulled Richie in one more time. "We can get you the help you need. In fact, we can all get the help we need. We have to stop pretending that everything's fine all the time, cause it's not."

"Brave words." Richie teased and Eddie would take hundreds of insults from Richie if it meant that his friend kept living each day.

"Yeah, I am feeling a little brave today." Eddie grinned. "And I kinda like it."

"You know what..." Richie hesitated. "I do too."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

And the five boys walked towards their bikes, hands intertwined because it was them against the world and all they had was each other. Things were going to get better. They would because they were together.

Eddie would never stop being thankful for that.

Author's Note:

I don't know why this is my third IT fanfiction in 5 days, I didn't even see half the movie cause I had my hands over my face and was screaming like a baby. I also don't know why I keep hurting Richie. I'm sorry.

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